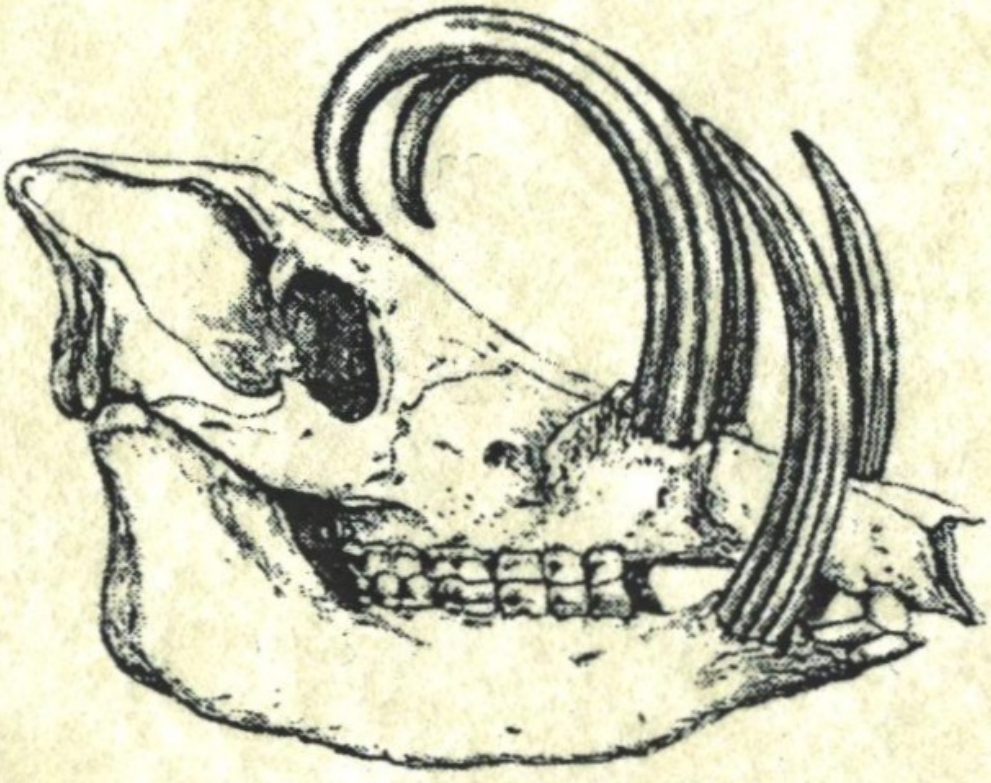
The Missing Law:
Nope, Still Missing

The Author Forgives
Michael L Wong 2023,
Dunks on Darwin
(But not like That,)
& Suggests Renaming
Natural Selection to
Differential Persistence



Morgan Stern

For my indoctrination I went to a conference on evolution (against.) There were dinosaur coloring books and a lecture. You know the phrase "checkmate, atheists"? Their equivalent was the question "Were you there?" which we hadn't been either. Topics also included entropy. The puzzle of entropy was demonstrated with an Australian leather cowboy hat. Method: bury hat; exhume after x years. Finding: hat worse. Conclusion: entropy shown, evolution debunked. Checkmate.

Today I happily acknowledge evolution is fact. Don't doubt that as I go on: I'm not antiscientific. I'm so science-loving I read papers like M L Wong's "On the Roles of Function and Selection in Evolving Systems."

I want to say about five things first.

1. As Nelson Muntz said, I can think of at least two things wrong with that title.*
1. **Entropy is a creative and destructive force.**[2]

*"Bart on the Road," 1996, Ep 148 3F17

[2]More upcoming

1. Wong is trying to find the missing law of systems, and getting press with it. This is invaluable for the scientific conversation, regardless that he's wrong.
2. We know he's wrong because last year Meredit Root-Bernstein said so in prestigious journal PNAS.* Which is very lucky for me. I was going to whine on my own authority that Wong's "functional information" concept is bullshit, then zoom out and say **selection is bullshit.** MRB cleans Wong up and makes my point in perfect, real example.

*Pronounced "penis."

First, Wong and cohort waste good effort coming up with the idea that complexity arises from certain functional information being **selected for.**

Then, MRB is forced to take her time formally correcting a first-year undergrad-level conceptual error about **what selection is:** their "assumption that there is such a thing as selection for violates valid reasoning in evolutionary biology."

It's tempting to take a certain lesson from this that I'm cleverer than a fancy scientist, then an even bigger boffin backed me up. It's easy, and it reinforces existing narrative, to dunk on Wong in isolation. But here's something more challenging and humbling: asking **why did he make the mistake?**

I blame Darwin.

"Natural selection" proceded by analogy from artificial selection, or animal breeding by us. Choose your analogies wisely, because this one fucked us up forever. **Selection is the wrong word.**

Out of space, so that's my point: the word selection is what's wrong with the theory of evolution. It'll keep misleading. Scientists think they can redefine a normal word into a technical one, but it doesn't stick when MRB corrects us that selection is **post-hoc, non-agentive, goal-free,** occuring via **nonuniform nonsurvival.**

It will stick only when we rename it. I suggest:

Differential Persistence.

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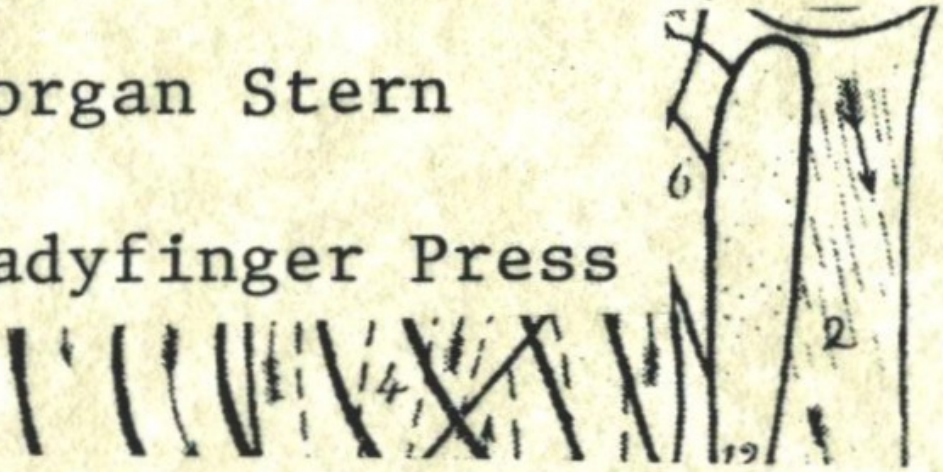

Wong: DOI
10.1073/pnas.2310223120
Root-Bernstein: DOI
10.1073/pnas.2318689121

FIG. 1.